



Mt. Vernon Middle School

District: Mt. Vernon R-5

Enrollment: 505

Grade Range: 5-8



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The mission of Mt. Vernon Middle School, in partnership with students, parents, teachers, businesses, and the community, is to provide quality educational experiences to enable all students to reach their full potential and become healthy, responsible, and productive citizens, and lifelong learners.

Mt. Vernon Middle School originally opened as a junior high school in 1974. In 1997, it was restructured into the current middle school facility, housing grades five through eight. Mt. Vernon, the county seat for Lawrence County, is a rural community of approximately 4,000 people located in the southwest corner of the state. The primary employers in the community are government entities, including the Missouri Veterans Home, University of Missouri Rehabilitation Center, and the Missouri Youth Correctional Facility. Most of the students are Caucasian, with a small number of Hispanics and Native Americans. Approximately half of Mt. Vernon Middle School students are eligible for free or reduced price meals.

Traditions of Excellence

Like the small community of Mt. Vernon, the middle school has the feel of a community that can adapt to change while remaining anchored to a tradition of excellence. Programs and strategies have been established at Mt. Vernon Middle School to meet the needs of the student population. The curriculum offers students of all ability levels a quality educational experience that challenges and expands their capabilities within a variety of disciplines. Learning is centered on a core curriculum within communication arts, mathematics, science, and social studies and enhanced by an exploratory program including art, music, technology, health and physical education, LifeSkills, effective education, vocational agriculture, and family and consumer sciences.

“BEST PRACTICE IN ACTION...”

- ***Alternative School*** – Mt. Vernon Middle School has developed an alternative school housed at the Missouri Baptist Children’s Home.
- ***Opening the Horizon*** – Opening the Horizon is a partnership with Southwest Missouri State and Drury Universities and the National Science Foundation that encourages girls to excel in math and science through Saturday workshops promoting hands-on activities.
- ***Lunch Bunch*** – During Lunch Bunch, the counselor meets with at-risk students, offering them the opportunity to build new and diverse friendships in a secure, small-group setting.

All classes are mixed-ability grouped, with the exception of 7th and 8th grade mathematics, which offers students a choice of general math, pre-algebra, and algebra. Interdisciplinary teams make use of common planning time to maximize student progress and collaborate on thematic units. Classroom instruction is differentiated to meet

the needs of all learners. Utilizing “class within a class” strategy, inclusion encourages peer interaction and acceptance of diversity. An instructor for gifted students provides enrichment. A CARE Team identifies at-risk students and refers them for appropriate services, and the after-school High Flier Program offers tutoring and enhancement activities to all middle school students.

Assessment of learning and evaluation of growth in student achievement are integrated into expectations for excellence at Mt. Vernon Middle School. Teachers participated in three years of MAP training to write assessments in a format similar to those used on MAP tests. Teachers regularly analyze benchmarks for strengths and weaknesses in student performance and realign grade-level expectations to ensure that they are accurately, developmentally spiraled. Assessment data and subject area department revisions guide teachers in their daily instruction. Collectively, these efforts have resulted in improved student achievement. For three years in a row, Mt. Vernon School has received recognition from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for Distinction in Performance.

Visionary Leadership; Dedicated Teachers

Under the leadership of a visionary principal, Mt. Vernon Middle School faculty and staff realize a shared vision accepted by students, parents, teachers, and the community. The principal is a participant in the instructional process, maintaining an “open door policy” that gives personnel the freedom to express their ideas and opinions. He fosters an environment where teacher creativity and collaboration flourish, beginning each year with a 24-hour faculty and staff retreat that provides a forum for goal setting, planning and team building.

Teachers at Mt. Vernon Middle school are dedicated members of a learning community that values professional development. Staff development activities include training in differentiated instruction, technology integration, and alternative assessment strategies, and utilization of faculty study groups for facilitating integration of communication arts throughout the curriculum. Teachers demonstrate their commitment through the amount of time that they give to the school. They participate in numerous after school, weekend, and summer workshops, conferences, graduate courses, and advanced degree programs, as well as working both before and after school mentoring and tutoring students to help them develop their gifts and talents.

“WORDS OF WISDOM”

- **“Continuous school improvement is a shared responsibility of parents, teachers, and students.”**
- **“Practicing honesty and integrity in academic work are skills that students can carry over to the workplace.”**
- **“Instilling a ‘sense of place’ within the middle school students helps them become contributing community members.”**

Community Support for Learning

Part of Mt. Vernon Middle School’s mission is to work in partnership with the community to create a climate of success for all learners. Through an annual Family Community Night, the school promotes the development of partnerships for the purpose of enrichment, sharing resources, and practical experiences. Numerous community organizations provide school supplies, clothing, and financial assistance in order to meet students’ physical and educational needs. Local law enforcement officers provide drug and alcohol prevention programs. World War II veterans from the Missouri Veterans Home participate in interviews for a student writing assignment. Community and business leaders are speakers at the Career Fair and bring informational displays to the Health Fair.

Mt. Vernon Middle School’s faculty and staff pride themselves on their accomplishments and believe that they will continue a tradition of excellence. In the words of Tatanka Iotanka (Sitting Bull), “Let us put our minds together, and see what life we will make for our children.”